

Public Notice – Environmental Project

PURPOSE OF NOTICE:

The Department of Environmental Quality seeks public comment on the state's response to the environmental aspects of a proposed project in Virginia coastal waters.

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD:

January 14, 2014 to February 11, 2014

TYPE OF RESPONSE:

Federal Consistency Determination

DEQ is reviewing a proposed federal action to determine if it is consistent with the Virginia Coastal Zone Management Program (VCP) established pursuant to the U.S. Coastal Zone Management Act. The VCP seeks to protect the quality of air, water or other natural resources in Virginia's coastal area.

NAME OF AGENCY PROPOSING THE PROJECT:

DOC/NOAA/National Marine Fisheries Service

PROJECT DESCRIPTION:

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) proposes to implement the South Atlantic Coastal Migratory Pelagics Framework Action 2013 (Framework Action). Currently, in the South Atlantic, the transfer of harvested fish at sea is prohibited for any species under a commercial trip limit, and only two gillnets are allowed on a federally permitted Spanish mackerel vessel. In some instances the trip limit may be exceeded with just one gillnet set, and the excess fish must be discarded. Most discarded fish die due to trauma caused during capture. The Framework Action would allow a portion of a gillnet and its contents to be transferred, under certain conditions, from a vessel that has met the Spanish mackerel trip limit to another federally permitted Spanish mackerel vessel that has not yet reached the trip limit. This may reduce dead discards and minimize waste when catch in one net exceeds the trip limit for the vessel. Additionally, the Framework Action would modify the commercial trip limits for Atlantic king mackerel in the Florida east coast subzone. The current system limits the rate of harvest causing the commercial sector to close before Lent, the most lucrative part of the fishing season. The trip limit modifications are expected to help minimize lost opportunities to fish and optimize profitability in the king mackerel sector of the coastal migratory pelagic fishery. The NMFS has submitted a Federal Consistency Determination that finds the proposed action consistent, to the maximum extent practicable, with the enforceable policies of the Virginia Coastal Zone Management Program.

HOW TO COMMENT:

DEQ accepts comments from the public by e-mail, fax or postal mail. All comments must include the name, address and telephone number of the person commenting and be received by DEQ within the comment period. The public may review the project documents at DEQ's central office in Richmond.

CONTACT FOR PUBLIC COMMENTS, DOCUMENT REQUESTS AND ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

NAME; John E. Fisher
DEQ Central Office
Office of Environmental Impact Review
629 East Main Street, Room 633
Richmond, Virginia, 23219;

Phone: (804) 698-4339
Fax: (804) 698-4319
E-mail: john.fisher@deq.virginia.gov